

Title: Matt's Tale Vol. I

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Ilshenar again was blessed with almost indescribable fair weather. In this land of new wonders, the sunlight always seemed a little brighter, the clouds floated a little higher, the air felt crisper and

cleaner, and the waters of the lakes and rivers quenched the thirst more deeply. It truly was a land for the adventurer, open and free, but full of many dangers. The plot known as Pormir

Felwis shared in nature's good will this day, however the air was perfumed with an aroma that was somewhat odd; the smoke of an open fire and roasted meat. This was peculiar in that,

though many traveled through Ilshenar, not many people made camp. In a secluded clearing near the river the carcass of a wyvern lay splayed on the ground. The creature had been

butchered in a rather shoddy fashion, but looked to have rendered up most of its useful portions. Near the corpse a young woman sat on the ground, elbows on knees, and at her feet was a small, hot

campfire on which chunks of the slain lizard were

cooking. In one hand she held a charred filet of wyvern and in the other hand a large clove of garlic. She would alternately tear a morsel

of the meat with her teeth and then take a bite of the garlic, chewing rapidly and swallowing hard. Owing to the poisons that coursed through the monster's veins, the steaks were

more tender and sweeter than Delucian beef, and her preparing the meat with garlic and ginsing before roasting almost made it a delicacy and much safer to eat. An assassin she met had

hinted that if one were to eat the meat of a wyvern, and survive, it would increase ones immunity to poisons. The woman had a weakness to poisons, and weakness was something she had no use

for. So she continued her deadly meal. Occasionally, she would retch and reel back as if to faint, at which time she would raise a flask of thick, orange liquid and desperately chug the fluid.

The process continued until she could eat no more. She rested with her head lowered between her knees, at times shaking her head to clear her thoughts and make even a more tangled mess

of her long blond hair. Drawing herself up to her feet, she took a few stumbling dance steps, as if to test the level of her vertigo. Satisfied

that she was not about to collapse, she removed a sack of salt from her backpack and made to where she had staked out the wyvern's thick hide. She heavily salted the hide, working the grains in with her boots and fists. She swore at herself as she examined an area of the hide that was badly tattered and scoured. The bolt of thought and energy had dispatched the beast quickly, yes, but had blown the front leg and shoulder from the creature and had ruined an otherwise perfect pelt. 'Better concentration,' she reminded herself.

After the thick leather was thoroughly salted, she rolled it up tightly and bound it with tendons. There would be enough here for a new set of armour. The leather armour she wore at the time was made for a man. It restricted her breathing when she needed to calm her thoughts and, in all honesty, didn't fit well for obvious reasons. A good tailor would set her up well, and the wyvern hide would offer greater protection. She lifted the heavy roll and carried it to where she had hitched her horse to a nearby tree. She threw the hide over the horse's rump and lashed it to the back of the finely crafted saddle. While tying the knots she glanced at the coat of arms for the House of Spur that was expertly tooled into the rise of the saddle. It reminded her that she should make great haste in returning

the stead to the stable.  
If the Master of the  
House were to find out  
she had taken one of his  
horses without asking, he  
would have her hide!

She readied to mount her horse, but quickly ran back to the wyvern carcass, as if she had forgotten something. She grabbed the monster's tail by its sharp stinger and with her knife made a deep incision beneath the dangerous barb. Reaching inside with her hand, she drew out the gland that contained the deadly liquid which had finished many a warrior. Cutting the gland free, she thought to herself that her assassin friend might pay well for this little item. Gently squeezing the gorey sack, she applied a smear of the poisonous bile to her knife and tucked the blade away safely in the sheath in the small of her back. She tied off the organ, stuffed it in her pack and returned to and swung up on her horse.

She walked her ride to the edge of the clearing and looked back. She studied her campsite and then closed her eyes, held out an open, contorted hand, pursed her lips and released a puff of air, as if to blow out a candle. A violent gust of wind swept down over the trees and blasted into the clearing. Branches were broken and downed, leaves madly tossed about and the fire was extinguished; its ashes scattered. The wyvern's corpse was covered by the tossed about

underbrush and all evidence of her previous activities was removed.

She opened her eyes and cocked her head to the side admiring her work. She reined the horse around hard, loosed a loud, long whistle and spurred the animal into a gallop towards the nearby moongate. She entered the moongate at a full run as she did not fear this method of travel. Her presence was known briefly south of Trinsic and, only by the cause of her wishes and knowledge of the ethers, she then materialized with her steed's hooves pounding the firm soil of Vesper Road in the northeast of Felucca...

The old bridge thudded hollowly under hooves as the young mage trotted her master's horse into Minoc. Dirt-caked miners shuffled through the streets leading heavily laden packhorses to the smithy's shop where the ores of their labor were smelted into the materials that armed Britannia. She rode slowly through the workers that seldom raised their eyes, much less tipped a hat in her direction. Tending to a few errands, she haggled and bartered for a few items that she required, then made for the stable to return the steed. The stablemaster was properly bribed so that the horse was carefully groomed and that no one would know that the animal had ever left the stable. Her story in place, she ran through the sooty streets to the edge of town,

glancing back as the  
chimney of the  
blacksmith's shop exhaled  
billowing clouds of black  
smoke that drifted slowly  
and sank upon the city.  
Minoc was busy these  
days.

See next book